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ABSTRACT

Information about consulting projects and consultants is provided to help college administrators. It is noted that colleges are increasingly asking consultants for help with such diverse projects as database design, collection of new information, or the development of evaluative procedures. The stages of a successful consulting project and the roles a consultant should assume within these phases are discussed. The first stage is exploring the issues for which outside help is sought; the second stage begins when the consultant and the administrator formally define their working relationship by means of a proposal, a work plan, and a contract. The formal work starts at the third stage: mapping the problem, gathering information and data, analyzing the information, problem solving, and making recommendations. The final stage is completion, including writing the final report and achieving certain outcomes. Attention is also directed to: how to find the right consultant, costing out the consultant's services and the consulting project; the type of contract that should be written and necessary contract clauses; mutual responsibilities of clients and consultants; the political realities of a consulting project; and the evaluation of the consulting process. (SW)

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An NCHEMS Executive Overview

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The Effective Use of Management Consultants in Higher Education

Jana B. Matthews

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About the Author

Jana B. Matthews received her degrees from Earlham College, the University of Rhode Island, and Harvard University. She also attended Yale University and the University of London. Prior to joining NCHEMS she served as an independent consultant, a member of the senior staff in the Public Affairs Center at Arthur D. Little, Inc., and Assistant Provost/Director for Academic Affairs in the Massachusetts State College System. She has done management consulting at numerous colleges and universities, as well as state and federal agencies throughout the United States and abroad.

Presently, Dr. Matthews heads the Management Services Division at NCHEMS. There are two major programs within this division: the Management Development Program, providing seminars, institutes, and training activities; and the Direct Assistance Program, offering management consulting activities.

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Acknowledgments

I have tried to write a book that integrates experience and analysis. While serving as administrator in a state college system, I contracted with consultants for various purposes. Some projects went well, some failed miserably—and I was often at a loss to explain why. Later, I joined the staff of a large consulting firm. My colleagues at Arthur D. Little, Inc., especially William Carey and Charles C. Halbower, helped me understand what special roles the consultant could play, what responsibilities the consultant and client had to each other, and what made a project successful. The experience of being a client as well as a consultant proved invaluable; I am grateful to the many people who participated in each of those projects.

Although I tried to learn from each endeavor, I never formally analyzed any of these projects until the late Stephen K. Bailey, my mentor at Harvard, suggested I study the consulting process in higher education. In addition to Donald Warwick and Paul Ylvisaker at Harvard, both John Van Maanen and Edgar Schein at MIT's Sloan School of Management provided valuable counsel and guidance as I attempted to carry out that analysis. I thank

them especially for what I learned about the subtleties of process and standard consulting, the ethical dilemmas that consultants must face, as well as the politics of consulting.

Writing this monograph took longer than anticipated, and I want to thank Clara Roberts for her infinite patience and encouragement all along the way. The comments of those who reviewed earlier drafts of the manuscript were invaluable: Eddie J. Davis, Harold Enarson, Dennis Jones, John Keller, Richard Pattenaude, and Roland Rautenstraus. Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank Linda Mullins and Bob Conrow. Linda patiently typed more drafts of this monograph than she cares to remember. Bob provided more than editorial services. He helped us remain constant to the goal: to write a monograph that would increase the effectiveness of higher-education administrators as they work with management consultants.

Introduction

The NCHEMS Executive Overview Series focuses on the information sources administrators need to make sound decisions, as well as the processes by which those decisions get made. Our intent in these volumes is to help our readers:

- Understand the characteristics of and differences between data bases and information systems (see *Data and Information for Executive Decisions in Higher Education*)
- Acquire and use particular types of information, such as student-outcomes information or comparative data about other institutions (see *Information on Student Outcomes: How to Get It and How to Use It* and *Comparative Data for Administrators in Higher Education*)
- Recognize how several different types of decision processes take place in higher education, depending on the issues, the decisionmakers, and the context within which the decisions are made (see *Rational Decisionmaking in Higher Education*)

- Know what information and processes are appropriate for various program-review situations (see *Program Review in Higher Education: Within and Without*)

The sixth monograph in this series, *The Effective Use of Management Consultants in Higher Education*, seeks to provide administrators with information about consulting projects and consultants. More and more, colleges and universities are asking consultants for help with such diverse projects as the design of data bases and information systems, the collection of new information, or the development of evaluative processes and procedures, such as program review. As a result, consultants are not only involved in the collection of "decision information," but increasingly they are partners in the actual decision processes.

The purpose of this book is to help higher-education administrators use consultants more creatively, efficiently, and effectively. Chapter 1 offers a look at the components of a typical consulting process. The stages that form the foundation of a successful project are examined, along with the roles a consultant can assume within these phases.

Chapter 2 gives a brief overview of circumstances that may prompt administrators to look for consulting assistance and then suggests how to locate the right consultant for the job.

Chapter 3 provides critical information needed for writing up a contract for services. In addition to advice on how to get the most from a project investment, different types of contracts and various contract clauses are explained in detail.

Chapter 4 specifies some of the mutual responsibilities of clients and consultants and looks at the political realities of a consulting project. An analysis of political factors that may affect consulting projects is discussed along with an overview of the responsibilities of administrators in these environments.

Chapter 5 summarizes the issues addressed in this monograph and provides a way to answer the all-important question, "Was it

worth it?" With the help of this model, administrators can effectively measure their performance, the consultant's performance, and the overall degree of project success.

CHAPTER 1

Consulting: A Look at the Components

Consulting is an age-old profession. History is replete with stories of kings, generals, and prime ministers who asked for advice from seers and wise ones or, with less good fortune, turned to magicians and charlatans. Consultants (those who provide counsel) have often been either vilified or deified. As an old joke goes, "A consultant is a person who borrows your watch to tell you what time it is." However, if everything works out well, he may be viewed as "a person who borrows your watch to teach you how to tell time."[1]

One administrator complained that he hired a consultant to solve a particular problem. After weeks of study, the consultant's report simply rehashed the basic problem; it said nothing about how to resolve it. The administrator hoped to get rid of a problem

1. Please note: Throughout this monograph, "he" is used to avoid the awkward he/she construction. The reader is reminded that "he," "his," or "him," could just as easily be "she," "hers," or "her."

and gain a solution. Instead, he ended up with three problems: the original problem, less money to solve it, and peers reluctant to seek outside help ever again.

In other instances, we find consultants are sometimes glorified as miracle workers. For example, many administrators freely share and expound upon their success stories at higher-education association meetings. They report that their consultant told them what the problem was, outlined alternative solutions, recommended a solution, and lo and behold, it worked! The institution now has better program-review procedures or enrollment strategies that helped turn the institution around.

No doubt the truth about consultants lies somewhere in the middle: consultants are rarely charlatans or miracle workers. Like all professionals, they need to operate within well-defined and agreed-upon limits in order to perform their duties successfully.

Why Use Consultants?

Administrators may require consultant assistance for the following: *Instant staff* when the current staff does not have the expertise or time to do the job that is required; *training* when the current staff needs help or tutoring to learn how to do the job; *impartial assessment* when a complicated problem exists and no one on campus is able to determine the causes; *justification* when the administrator wants an outsider to corroborate his interpretation of the situation, or perhaps even his preferred solution. Administrators should try to be honest with themselves in determining whether they want a consultant who will provide them with an independent assessment, or whether they want a consultant who will tell them what they want to hear. They are usually more impartial when selecting consultants for temporary staff or trainers of current staff than they are when they begin searching for someone to provide an outside assessment of a difficult problem.

Limits can be found to any consultant's expertise; no consultant knows enough or has enough experience to advise on everything. The consultant who assists with personnel problems may have little to offer in the design of a planning and budgeting system. And the consultant who is proficient in solving organizational problems is not likely to have enough expertise to recommend an appropriate computer configuration. When problems are highly complicated and pervasive, it may be necessary to bring in a team of consultants whose members have different yet complementary skills.

Before deciding to bring in a consultant, however, an administrator must weigh the trade-offs. What are the costs and benefits of hiring temporary assistance versus hiring full-time staff to address the problem? What level of expertise is truly needed to solve the problem? Is there a short-term or ongoing need for the consultant's expertise? The administrator should consider whether he wants the consultant to work alone on the problem, whether he wants the consultant to do some ad hoc training of staff, or whether the consultant's explicit job should be staff training. In particular, he should think about why his own staff is not able to accomplish the task and what he expects a consultant to do.

Consulting Project Stages

Regardless of the length or type of consultation, successful consulting projects must, of necessity, move through certain discrete stages. These stages are not predetermined time periods; they are logically distinct phases with different sets of issues that need to be addressed at each stage. The higher-education administrator who engages a consultant must understand these stages and manage the consulting project with the same diligence that he manages any other activity under his authority.

All projects should begin with extended discussions between the consultant and the administrator (or client) to explore such

issues as the institution's readiness for outside help, the underlying assumptions of the consulting assignment, the desired objectives or outcomes of the entire process, and the conditions under which the assignment is to be carried out. Following this exploration period, the second stage begins when the consultant and the administrator formally define their working relationship by means of a proposal, a work plan, and finally a contract.

The formal work starts at the third stage: "mapping" the problem, gathering information and data, analyzing the information, determining the various ways that a problem can be solved, intervening, problem solving, formulating suggestions, making recommendations, and building commitment to the recommended course of action. During the final stage of the project, completion, all contractual commitments are met, and the client should evaluate the project and the consultant.

Figure 1 serves as an illustration of the four stages and their attendant issues. If these issues are not dealt with in their appropriate stage, the project may be endangered on several levels. First, a crisis in confidence may arise that will threaten the administrator-consultant relationship. Second, it will take much longer to resolve issues later in the project than if they are addressed in sequence, or in their appropriate stage. Third, if project activities must be suspended while these issues are being resolved, momentum will be lost, and then it often takes additional resources to complete the project.

These consulting project stages are addressed below.

Stage One: Exploration

During the exploratory stage, administrators and consultants must agree first on the definition of the problem and, secondly, that an outsider can help in its solution. If a problem is viewed very differently by an administrator and a consultant, conflicts will begin immediately. If the problem is so complex that smaller problems must be defined first, then they must decide whether all

or some of the problems will be addressed, and in which order. In some cases, engaging a consultant may not be the best solution; appointing an internal task force to work on the problem may be more productive.

The matter of congruence between what the administrator wants and what the consultant can or will do must also be addressed. The administrator must provide enough information for the consultant to determine the role he is expected to play and, why he, in particular, has been contacted.

A further issue concerns the determination of who will be involved in the consulting project, and in what capacity. Who is the real client? In other words, what person or group must ultimately be satisfied with the project results? Other questions include: "Who will serve as client contact and have responsibility for coordinating project logistics?" "Who will need to be contacted for information?" "Who is likely to think he should be involved in this consulting project because he is a party-at-interest?" "Who will be responsible for implementing the consultant's recommendations?"

By thinking carefully about who should be involved in the consulting project, and in what capacity, the administrator can help determine his overall consulting needs. Some individuals or groups may be important information sources; others may be involved in reviewing consultant reports and in formulating recommendations. A smaller group may be involved in all aspects of the project.

Additional issues that need attention during the Exploration Stage include the time frame within which the work must be carried out, and any resource constraints that may affect the project or the consultant's recommendations. For example, project restrictions imposed by legislation, precedent, individuals, or groups need to be discussed candidly. Administrators, of course, should expect consultants to treat all this information confidentially, regardless of whether or not they move on to the next stage of the process. The issues explored when an administrator brings

FIGURE 1

Stages and Related Issues in the Consulting Project

STAGES	NAME	ISSUES
I	EXPLORATION	• Understanding why an outside consultant is needed • Learning why a particular consultant will be engaged • Determining what problems will be addressed • Deciding who is the client and who are the parties-at-interest • Ascertaining the constraints
II	DEFINITION	• Agreeing on the work plan and time frames; formulating a contract • Understanding the reporting relationships • Receiving feedback and modifying the workplan and relationships as needed

III	WORKING	• Carrying out tasks and activities specified in contract • "Mapping" problems and interactions • Data collection, verification, and analysis • Involving the clients and parties-at-interest; building commitment • Decision making • Receiving feedback and modifying the workplan and relationships as needed
IV	COMPLETION	• Writing final report, recommendations, documentation of work • Achieving certain outcomes • Assessing the consulting process • Assessing the role and performance of the consultant • Assessing the worth/usefulness of the work products or outcomes • Assessing individual and organizational learning

Source: Jana B. Matthews-Halbower, "Consulting at Colleges and Universities: An Analysis of the Process" (Ed. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1979), p. 24.

the consultant to campus during the Exploratory Stage will be further discussed in chapter 2.

Stage Two: Defining the Work Plan

Some administrators can provide consultants with enough information during exploratory visits to enable them to develop a proposal outline before they leave the campus. If they agree on the outline, a proposal can be quickly written, submitted, reviewed, and approved. Other administrators prefer the consultant to develop a draft proposal so any major misunderstandings can be aired before the proposal arrives in final form. If a proposal is inadequate or inappropriate, the administrator must decide whether to invest in another round of discussions, or whether to look for another consultant.

Most importantly, the proposal should define the problems to be addressed, how and when they will be addressed, the role the consultant will play, which reports and products will eventually be produced, and how much the completed project will cost. Issues addressed in the written proposal can later form the basis of a contractual agreement as discussed in chapter 3.

Stage Three: Working

Although project work begins the moment a consultant is contacted, administrators should not expect consultants to begin work outlined in the contract until this legal document is signed. The third stage is usually the longest stage, and the one most people associate with consulting. Administrators must realize that Stage Three activities cannot be accomplished until Stages One and Two have been concluded. As the saying goes, "A problem well defined is a problem half solved." The importance of taking the necessary time to define the real problem and choose the right consultant cannot be overemphasized.

CONSULTING: A LOOK AT THE COMPONENTS

The tasks consultants perform during the Working Stage include the following:

1. Information Gathering: Information may be gathered firsthand, from people by means of interviews or surveys, or secondhand, from extant reports, memoranda, or other documents. Sometimes all the information required can be gathered from sources within the institution; other times, it is necessary to use external sources and people. Depending on where the information is located, the consultant may spend a considerable amount of time on campus or off campus.
2. Information Analysis: Verification, manipulation, and analysis of information often takes place away from campus. A consultant needs to think about what he has found in the same way a detective thinks about clues and information, bringing a blend of expertise, experience, and special skills to his analysis of information. A good consultant will not have pat answers to problems nor will he propose a solution simply because it worked at another institution. He will not be satisfied until he has developed a solution that is particularly appropriate for the specific institution.
3. Presentation of Analyses: After the consultant has sufficiently analyzed the information, he should give the appropriate people on campus an opportunity to review the analyses, provide alternative interpretations, and discuss the outcomes of these various interpretations. Administrators should be wary of consultants who are reluctant to discuss their analyses with faculty and staff, or who prefer to deliver "surprise packages" at the end of the consulting project.
4. Development of Reports, Processes, or Outcomes: After discussion of the data analyses, a final report is generally written that describes the problem, the project history, the methods used to gather and analyze information and/or data,

alternative ways of solving the problem, the consultant's recommendation, and the cost of that recommendation. The administrator may want to ask the consultant to submit drafts of interim or final reports so ambiguities or disagreements can be worked out prior to the final report. If time is short, however, the administrator may simply ask the consultant to call him and review the report's major points and recommendations before it is sent to him. Administrators generally need some time to think about how best to implement the consultant's recommendation, and about the development of a strategy for disseminating the consultant's report and recommendations—before the final report arrives on their desks.

Stage Four: Completion

Project completion is usually marked by some tangible product or event such as the delivery of a final report, reaching a fund-raising goal, purchasing the recommended computer hardware or software, developing a position description and recruiting the new person, or acceptance of a planning process. If the consulting project has gone well, all those associated with it will feel a sense of satisfaction at the project's termination. They will agree that the solution was operationally feasible and intellectually acceptable, that the institution has been strengthened by the consulting process, and that all contractual requirements were met.

Although the administrator and consultant will be evaluating the consulting project informally throughout the project, they should both take time to evaluate the project at its conclusion. The evaluation process is discussed more thoroughly in chapter 5, and an evaluation framework is provided for administrators to use.

Consulting Types

There are many reasons why some consulting projects succeed and others fail. By the end of this monograph, the administrator should have some understanding of which variables contribute to the probability of success, which ones he can control, and which are governed by chance. One variable that he can control is the choice of a consultant with an appropriate consulting mode. There are many different modes of consulting, but all can be placed on a continuum ranging from "standard" consulting to "process" consulting.[2]

Standard consulting has its roots in the management sciences; a consultant applies his expertise to solve a specific problem. When the client knows exactly what the problem is, he will either want the consultant to go ahead and solve the problem, or else he will want to be given a detailed set of alternative solutions, along with a recommendation. In other cases, the client may expect the consultant to define the problem prior to offering a solution. Either way, the client will expect the "standard" consultant to assume full responsibility for doing the work *and* defining a solution. The client does not become involved until the time comes to implement a solution.

Process consulting, on the other hand, has its roots in the behavioral sciences. Process consultants are mainly concerned with working alongside those in the organization to develop appropriate processes and procedures. They are anxious to pass on their skills and values by helping managers learn to resolve conflicts and solve their own problems. Process consultants actively engage the client from the project's beginning, and in so doing, they expect to produce a demonstrable change in the client's values and behavior (figure 2).

2. Schein 1969, views the "standard consultant" as being primarily concerned with using his knowledge to solve the problem, and the "process consultant" as one who helps the client better perceive, understand, and act upon process events that occur in the client's environment.

FIGURE 2

Standard vs. Process Consulting

Operational Emphases	Standard ⟷ Process Directive ⟷ Non-Directive Mechanistic ⟷ Organistic Consultant-centered ⟷ Client-centered	
Focus of Consulting Project	Task: What is the problem and how can it be solved most efficiently?	Process: How can the organization be helped to define and solve its own problems?
Goals of Consulting Project	Defined by consultant	Defined by client
Role of Client	Controlled by consultant	Jointly determined by consultant and client
Distance Between Consultant and Client	Great: consultant emphasizes his "expertise" and "professionalism"	Little: consultant interacts with and encourages client to question him and undertake initiative
Outcomes	Immediate problem may be solved; client dependent on consultant; organizational processes may not be strengthened nor capabilities developed	Client strengthened; learns how to develop valid and useful information, make informed choices, and develop internal commitments/capabilities necessary for solving problems

Source: Jana B. Matthews-Halbower, "Consulting at Colleges and Universities: An Analysis of the Process" (Ed. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1979), p. 30.

CONSULTING: A LOOK AT THE COMPONENTS

The most successful consulting projects in higher education tend to include aspects of both standard and process consulting. One reason that some aspects of process consulting are required is that administrators in colleges and universities are usually trained as researchers and scholars. Most of them were once faculty members, who, even now, continue to work in an academic setting. Because of this, they tend to be reluctant to accept any advice on face value, even if it comes from experts. Most of them want to know *why* a particular recommendation is the most appropriate for a given situation, and they look to consultants to be "master teachers" as well as subject experts. In sum, they want to use the consulting project as a learning process for themselves and others in the institution. Unless they recognize this and structure the project's goals accordingly, they are likely to have a vague feeling of dissatisfaction about the overall project and its outcomes.

A second reason why consultants working in colleges and universities often need to use process skills is related to the setting in which the problems occur. Consultants are frequently expected to achieve consensus on very complex and politically sensitive issues. Many administrators have found that consensus comes easier through an outsider who can provide an objective analysis of the issues. Such a consultant will need to understand how to use existing organizational structures and processes to achieve consensus around the resolution of the problem. Even when a consultant is engaged primarily for his technical expertise, process skills will be required to get the necessary information.

Because the choice of consultants relates directly to the problem, some examples may help clarify the various circumstances that require different types of consultants, with different expertise and different consulting modes.

When an institution decides to embark on a capital campaign, a fund-raising consultant is frequently engaged for the life of the campaign. Before deciding to bring in a consultant, the administrator should think about whether it will be more cost-effective to add staff to the development office than to invest in a short-term, expensive commodity such as a fund-raising consultant. After

considering the trade-offs, he may decide that bringing in a consultant is worthwhile for three reasons. First, it is usually too expensive to hire a full-time professional with capital-campaign organization and management skills. Second, once the campaign is over, he will probably not need someone with those skills. And third, if the consultant can provide ad hoc training to the development staff and can transfer some of his skills and knowledge to them, they will be much more effective during follow-up phases as well as in future campaigns.

An administrator at another institution may face a different set of problems. Enrollment is declining and there are conflicting explanations. The admissions staff reports that the enrollment decline is due to inadequate student services and poor dormitory living conditions. The student-services people indicate that faculty indifference is the problem. Faculty, on the other hand, complain about the failure of marketing and recruitment strategies to attract quality students. While the administrator realizes that these factors and others—individually or collectively—may be causing the decline, he wants a plan of action to reverse the trend. Although he might try to organize an internal task force to deal with the problem, such a group might not be very effective if the various parties end up blaming each other. An alternative is to bring in a consultant to sort through these possible causes and to make appropriate recommendations.

In a third situation, an administrator may want to engage in strategic planning, but he is uncertain how best to involve faculty, students, administrators, and board members. He does not know which information should be provided, whether to incorporate program review into the process, and how to link the planning and budgeting processes. He wants a consultant who can help him develop a planning system that is sensitive to people concerns, process issues, and data needs. Moreover, the consultant who develops such a planning system must be acceptable to the faculty, as well as to the academic, budgeting, and planning officers of the institution and the board.

Consulting Roles

Figure 3 displays a continuum of roles that consultants assume, varying from "standard" to "process" consulting. The intent of the figure is to illustrate a progression from standard consulting (which is more directive and more consultant-centered) to process consulting (which is less directive and far more client-centered). In the examples above, the fund-raising consultant could be categorized as an *expert*. He has a clear notion of how to carry out the fund-raising campaign, and once he has diagnosed the specific funding needs, he will organize the campaign and become an *advocate*. He may also serve as a *teacher-trainer* of the staff, but most of the roles he assumes will be on the left side of the continuum. This is not surprising, since the administrator was specifically looking for someone with fund-raising knowledge and experience that no one at the institution had.

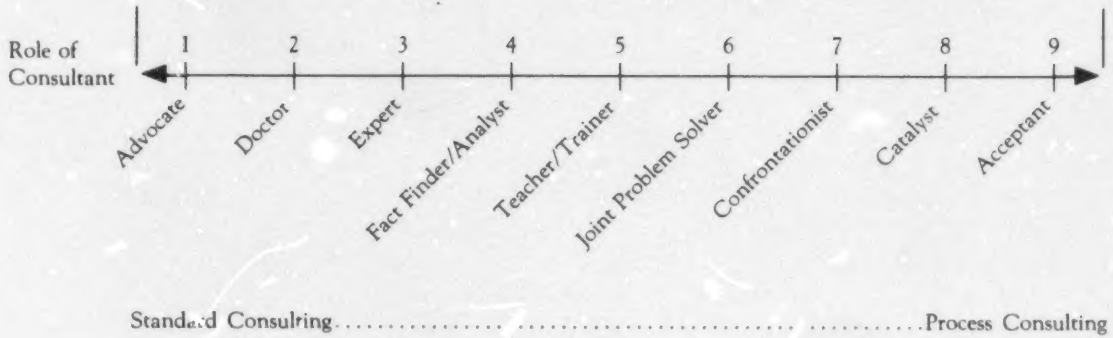
The consultant called in to look at the enrollment decline will probably assume more of the roles described in the center of the continuum. He will spend some of his time functioning as *fact finder/analyst* and *doctor*, diagnosing the problem. But if some people do not want to accept responsibility for the enrollment decline, he may have to be *confrontational*. He will probably also serve as a *catalyst* in trying to get the various parties to begin working together on joint problem solving so they can develop an effective strategy for managing enrollments.

The consultant called in to design the strategic-planning process will function more as a process consultant and will help the administrator develop a planning system that modifies and incorporates existing organizational processes. He is likely to be more *catalytic* and *accepting* than the other two consultants because the project in which he is involved requires him to play that role.

In these three examples, the first situation requires someone to function primarily as a standard consultant, the second requires the person to function as both a standard and a process consultant, and the third requires someone to function primarily as a

FIGURE 3

Continuum of Consulting Roles



Source: Jana B. Matthews-Halbower, "Consulting at Colleges and Universities: An Analysis of the Process" (Ed. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1979), p. 30.

process consultant. A successful consultant, however, will be able to play as many roles during the course of the project as the different situations or stages of the project require. The administrator must decide whether the problem the consultant is to address will require the roles associated primarily with the standard consultant, the process consultant, or some combination of both.

CHAPTER 2

How to Find the Right Consultant

Finding a good consultant is not easy. Higher-education consultants do not generally belong to national consulting organizations nor are there credentials, licenses, or regulations that govern their activities. This makes it difficult to find appropriate consultants, or to judge their expertise, worth, and value before you engage them.

Using an RFP

If the problem is well defined, the most frequent practice is to write a Request for Proposal (RFP) that can be sent to independent consultants and consulting firms. Or another possibility is simply to advertise the availability of the RFP.

When an institution develops an RFP, it serves two purposes. First, it forces the institution to come to grips with the problem by putting time, money, and resources on the line. Secondly, the firms and individuals who respond must, of necessity, demonstrate their sincere interest in working with the institution. Respondents

largely spend their own time and money thinking through the problem and writing the proposal.

On the other hand, the RFP procedure has some noted disadvantages. Because the RFP represents a very rigid procedure, it is not useful in those instances where the problem lacks proper definition. Administrators generally have some control over who receives the RFP; they have little control over who responds to it. According to most bidding procedures, if an administrator provides information to one individual, he must make it available to all. Moreover, once he receives the various proposals, an administrator may find it almost impossible to determine whether the respondents are truly capable of doing the work. Particularly in the case of consulting firms, the resumes may look good and the firm's references may be excellent, but such documents often do not specify whether the project team members have worked on similar projects. In addition, administrators may find it difficult to develop the criteria and weighting scheme for the selection of a winning proposal. For these and other reasons, the RFP may not prove to be the best procedure for finding a consultant. If it is used, the RFP must include sufficient information to enable a consultant to write a proposal that is responsive.

Finding a Consultant on Your Own

If the administrator decides to find a consultant on his own, he will most likely contact colleagues at other institutions, describe the situation, and ask them for recommendations. This person-to-person approach is useful provided the administrator can describe the problem sufficiently so others can truly understand his needs, and if his friends and colleagues are willing to relate their experiences honestly. Administrators may be tempted to conceal their true feelings or experiences if their consulting project turned out to be a waste of money or produced unfavorable results.

A second popular method is to contact someone who has given a speech, made a presentation, or taught a course on a topic closely related to the problem. While the administrator might not have any way of knowing how the consultant actually performs, he should have some sense of the consultant's conceptual approach as well as his ability to communicate to an audience. Admittedly, that is not as good as firsthand experience with the person in the role of consultant, but it is better than no experience at all. A related option is to contact the author of an article or book the administrator has read whose topic bears directly on the issues at hand. If the author's approach to the problem sounds reasonable, the administrator may want to explore it further through correspondence and interviews. In both these cases, the administrator will want to ascertain whether the person has ever consulted, and if so, he will want to contact former clients to discuss the person's performance as a consultant.

Sometimes the executive staff at higher-education organizations can be asked for the names of appropriate consultants. When asked, they usually will recommend members of the organization who have consulted. One organization maintains a roster of consultants from which staff make recommendations. Another organization provides consulting assistance, under contract, to colleges and universities.

Contacting a Consulting Firm

A final alternative is to contact one of the nationally known firms that provide consulting services. The staff at these large firms may not always have extensive consulting experience with higher-education institutions, but they are likely to have consulted with various nonprofit organizations.

A senior member of the firm usually assumes the task of coordinating the proposal writing and may later serve as project director.

Although other team members will do project work at the company offices, as far as the administrator is concerned, one person usually functions in the role of consultant. It is important to understand that the consulting contract is with the company, not the individual. In other words, the consulting firm, not the administrator, will choose the project director as well as the people to serve on the team. In some circumstances, this can be a drawback; in others, it is an advantage. If sensitive political issues are at stake, the administrator may want to contract with a firm rather than an individual consultant, to avoid the implication that the administrator may have hand-picked the consultant for ulterior motives.

A consultant's professional reputation depends on his ability to deliver high quality consulting services, on time and within budget. If an administrator finds that either the consultant or the services he provides are not satisfactory, he should say so. He may have more leverage, however, if he has hired a consulting firm rather than an individual, because the firm can bring additional resources to bear on the problem or the project director can be replaced.

To summarize, several alternatives are available for finding consultants. If the administrator knows precisely what his problem is, he can seek consultants through an RFP process, or he can ask colleagues and peers at other institutions to recommend consultants with whom they have worked. These alternatives assume: (1) that the administrator can provide sufficient details about the problem and its context so that those responding to the RFP or providing a recommendation can adequately describe the consultant's qualifications; and (2) that the administrator and consultant will have the same set of expectations concerning consultant performance. If the administrator wants a consultant who will provide answers to his questions so he can formulate his own solution but his colleagues want a consultant to present ready-made answers, a mismatch is bound to result.

On the other hand, if an administrator wishes to, he can launch his own consultant search, relying on personal judgment, intuition, or firsthand experience with people he has met at conferences or seminars. If he relies on this recourse, he will want to corroborate his judgment with others who have used the person as a consultant. A third alternative is to contact a consulting firm or an organization that specializes in consulting services.

Meeting Face-to-Face

Once an administrator has determined the type of consultant he wants, he will have to select the *right* consultant. Those identified through one or more of the processes outlined above can be considered as possibilities, but more information needs to be gathered before a final decision can be made.

If at all possible, administrators should meet face-to-face with prospective consultants. If an RFP has been developed, and the project is of sufficient financial magnitude, a bidders' conference can be held on campus within a few weeks after the RFP is released. Many large consulting firms cover travel expenses and a day of fact-finding at the institution. Few individuals or representatives of higher-education associations are able to afford the time and travel without reimbursement; because they do not set aside any business-development funds, however, their consulting rates may be considerably lower. If an administrator invites consultants who are not connected with a large consulting firm, he should be prepared to pay travel and consulting costs.

Consultant visits may in fact be considered indispensable in determining whether a good "fit" exists between the consultant, the institution, and the problem. Once a consultant agrees to a campus visit, his competence can be observed in several ways: through the types of questions the consultant asks and the comments he makes, the materials he wants to review, the list of people

he wants to interview while on campus, the way he suggests that his time be scheduled, and the contractual issues he discusses.

If the administrator has thoroughly defined the problem and the consultant has sufficiently indicated his competency to deal with it, there is a high probability that the project will go well. Before signing a contract, however, the administrator should insist that the consultant develop a detailed work proposal and activity chart.

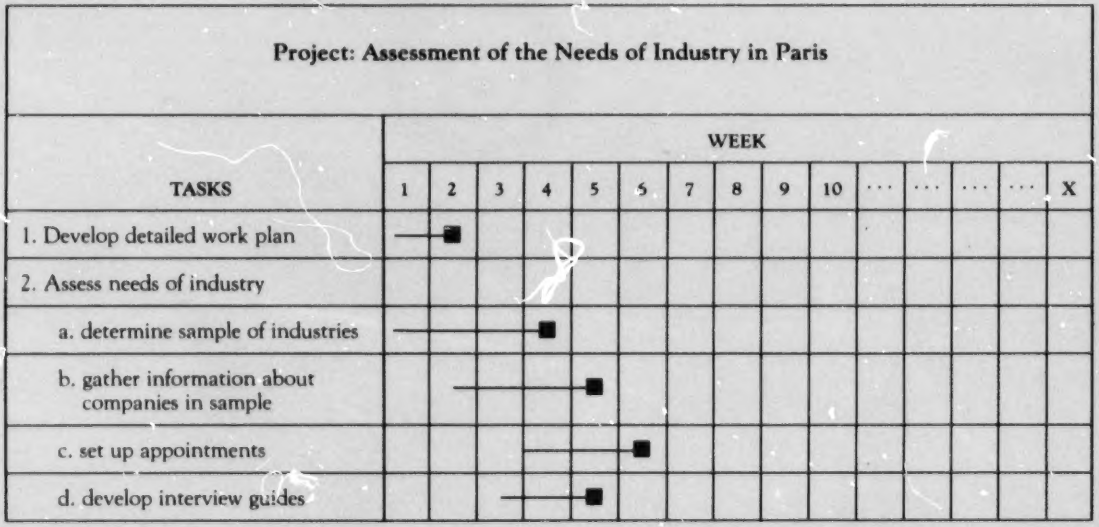
In one sense this proposal may be considered a draft of the contract. It should contain a description of the problem and schedule of tasks (see figure 4 on page 30), some indication of who will be working on the project (along with their qualifications), and a cost estimate. While proposals need not be organized as follows, these four issues ought to be addressed.

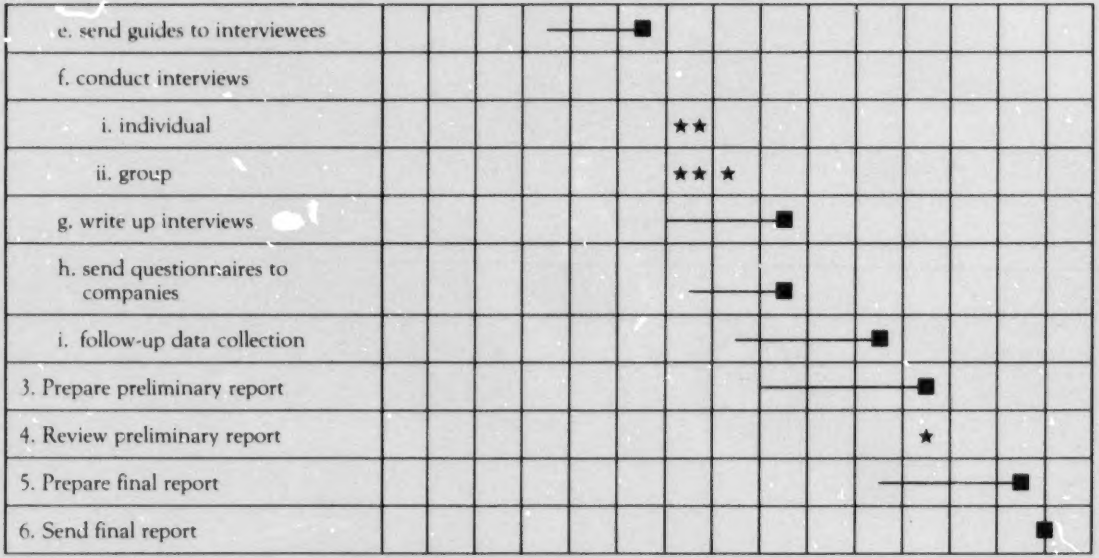
1. Demonstration of the consultant's understanding of the contextual issues and the immediate problem confronting the client. This is often developed in an "Introduction" or "Background" section of the proposal.
2. Specification of what will be done by whom, when, how, and within what time frame. The client and the parties-at-interest need to be identified and the reporting relationships should be detailed. This section of the proposal is often called "Tasks and Activities."
3. Description of interim or final reports, changes in individual or group behavior, and the processes and procedures that will be developed to attain the desired goals. This section of the proposal may be labeled "Project Outcomes or Products."
4. Estimation of the time a consultant will spend on a project, the fixed and variable expenses that are likely to be incurred, the total cost of the consulting arrangement being proposed, and the suggested method of payment. This section of a proposal may be labeled "Costs and Payments."

A fully detailed proposal offers the client and consultant further opportunity to test their respective perceptions and impressions. When the administrator finds the proposal satisfactory, he and the consultant will be ready to sign a contract and begin work.

FIGURE 4

Sample Project Activity Chart





★ = visit by member of project team
■ = task completed

CHAPTER 3

Costs, Contracts, and Clauses

Once the problem is defined and the client and consultant agree on a modus operandi, they need to determine how much the project will cost and what type of contract will best suit the particular project.

Administrators often have more experience in dealing with consultants and projects than in working out the contractual arrangements that are part and parcel of consulting projects. Most administrators' concerns focus on: costing out the consultant's services and the consulting project; the type of contract that should be written, given the specific problem to be addressed; and the contract clauses that should be included. This chapter addresses these critical issues.

Costs

Pricing consulting services is far more difficult than pricing products. When buying an automobile, for example, the customer knows that the price includes materials, labor, production costs,

dealer and transportation charges, and so forth. While we may believe that the final price tag is too high, we at least recognize the factors and components that go into the final product.

Determining either the materials or the labor costs for consulting services is much less precise. No one can accurately predict how much time or energy a particular project will require or what the final bill may be. Institutions typically deal with this uncertainty in three different ways, depending on their assets and their confidence in the consultant.

The first approach is that of the client who wants to get the job done but is unwilling or unable to pay for it. Almost every consultant has received a call from an administrator saying that his institution has a major problem but very little money. The administrator then asks if the consultant will be kind enough to solve the problem for little or no remuneration.

The second approach is exemplified by an organization that simply announces the top rate that it is willing to pay. This institution might simply announce its top rate or else specify in the RFP the amount of money available for the particular consulting service.

The third and most frequent procedure is to ask the consultant, once he understands the problem, how much the project is likely to cost. Project costs usually consist of a combination of professional services, materials, overhead, and travel expenses. While the latter three are largely self-explanatory, charges for professional services often require further explanation. Basically there are three ways to figure a person's consulting rate: salary percentage, total cost fee, and market value.

For example, Dr. Brown, an independent consultant, is likely to establish a consulting rate based on a *percentage* of his yearly salary. If his annual income including benefits amounts to $40,000, he will divide this figure by 220 work days, the figure determined when sick leave, weekends, vacation, and holidays are subtracted from the calendar year. His base consulting fee would

then be $182 per day. To this, he might add another $18 to round up the figure to a $200 per-day consulting rate.

An alternative to the salary percentage system is the *total cost* fee. With this method, the amount charged combines salary, benefits, secretarial costs, overhead, materials, and miscellaneous expenses. To account for the added expenses, the quoted fee may be anywhere from two to four times the consultant's actual salary. It does not, however, include reimbursable travel expenses.

The third approach for fee determination is based on the going *market value*. When a consultant's expertise and knowledge is in high demand, he will be able to charge as much as the client is willing to pay. Individuals who charge $600 to $1,000 per day know that client institutions will pay premium prices for what are considered to be premium services.

Consulting firms, of course, are known to charge high fees. A primary reason for this is that they include a substantial amount for overhead. These firms typically include charges ranging from 100 to 350 percent of direct salary costs to cover both management expenses and the costs of a skilled support group. These overhead charges often correlate directly to the size of the consulting firm. In other words, smaller firms are apt to have smaller overheads, but the bigger firms are likely to have comparably larger administrative budgets.

Contracts

In the long run, most administrators find that an individual's consulting fee is less important than the total cost of the service. Experienced clients know how to pick the appropriate type of contract for the job that must be done. Figure 5 indicates various contract types.

FIGURE 5

Types of Contracts

Pro Bonum	Consultant does not charge client for consulting services; expenses are usually reimbursed
Set Rate/Cost	Client announces maximum rate for consultants and/or dollar limit for project
Fixed Price	Client and consultant negotiate a price to do the project; price covers all consulting services and project expenses
Cost Plus Fixed Fee	Client reimburses consultant for the actual cost of time, materials, and expenses incurred in connection with the project, plus a fee (x% of the project) to manage the project
Time and Materials	Client pays for the consultant's time, at a predetermined rate, and any materials (at cost) used in connection with completing the project
Fee Plus Expenses	Client agrees to pay consultant's preestablished consulting fee, and to reimburse the consultant for all expenses incurred in connection with the project
Retainer	Consultant agrees to be available for some number of days within a specific time period; client pays the consultant for those days, whether or not the consultant works for the client

Fixed Price Contract

A fixed price contract is exactly what the name implies. With this type of contract, the consultant agrees to do a particular task within a particular time frame for a set sum of money. If $10,000 is agreed upon, that figure will include the consulting fee, travel, and all reimbursable expenses. If circumstances permit the consultant to do the job for less than the fixed price, he will be able to keep the difference. On the other hand, if he underestimates the work required, he will be obligated to complete the job at no extra charge. (In some cases the administrator may recognize that the consultant should be paid more money to complete the work. He may feel an ethical obligation to renegotiate the contract and the price, even though he is under no legal requirement to do so.)

Client organizations often prefer a fixed price contract because boundaries are set in terms of deliverables, time frames, and price. Consultants have a built-in incentive to provide their services as economically and efficiently as possible.

Cost Plus Fixed Fee

In the fixed price contract, the consultant agrees to perform the work for a set price. In a cost plus fixed fee contract, the client agrees to pay the consultant whatever it costs to do the job (usually up to some limit), plus an additional 5-10 percent management fee. Such a contract is often negotiated for research and development projects, when the researcher can only estimate the cost of completing the project.

Cost plus fixed fee contracts might be used in higher education when an outside agency is brought in to design a computer-based information system, a type of research and development project. The time required to complete such a project will depend on such variables as the data currently being collected, the number of staff the client makes available to work with the consultant, the specific

computer and/or computer configuration, the numbers and level of current systems, and whether or not those responsible for the project agree on what must be done. It is diff cult for a consultant to predict what such a project will cost before he knows more about these variables.

An administrator will want the consultant to provide his best estimate of what it will cost to do the work, and should try to hold the consultant to his estimate. Although a cost plus contract will specify that the consultant will be paid for all allowable costs, the administrator might want to establish an upper limit or "cap" to keep the costs from escalating out of control. When that limit is reached, the administrator and consultant will have to decide whether to modify and extend the current contract, negotiate a new contract, or end the consultant's involvement in the project (regardless of whether or not the project is finished).

Time and Materials

As one might imagine, a time and materials contract means that the client will pay the consultant for his time and all materials used in conjunction with the project. Consultants are paid according to an established rate, which, depending on the circumstances, may be hourly or daily. Materials are defined to be such items as secretarial expenses, computer time, paper and printing, and so on.

Administrators may find this type of contract useful under three conditions: first, when they have had considerable experience with the type of services they are asking the consultant to provide and know how much time the particular task will take; second, when they have a high degree of confidence in the consultant and trust his judgment; and third, when they are in a position to exercise tight controls over the consultant's performance.

This contract, like the cost plus fixed fee contract, may be a problem if the project takes longer to complete than anticipated,

and if the cost of the project exceeds the estimate. Specifying a "cap" in the contract may alleviate this problem. Exercising close control over the project will also be important if costs are to be contained. If this can be done, a time and materials contract is probably the most economical contract that can be written. The administrator is able to obtain the services he requires for less money that he would have to pay under a fixed price contract, and he can have the flexibility of a cost plus fixed fee contract without having to pay the management fee.

Consulting Fee Plus Reimburseable Expenses

A fourth type of contract is the fee plus reimbursable expenses. In this situation, the consultant quotes a daily consulting rate that usually falls somewhere between $500 and $1,000 to cover a proportion of salary, benefits, secretarial expenses, overhead, and so forth. In addition, the client agrees to reimburse the consultant for any travel and out-of-pocket expenses incurred in connection with the project.

Under this type of contract, the consultant agrees to complete the work within a specified number of days. The consultant then simply submits invoices for the days worked at the agreed upon consulting rate, plus copies of receipts for direct expenditures incurred in connection with the project.

This contract mode is particularly useful in cases where an institution wants to make selective use of a consultant at strategic points in the project. The major disadvantage, however, is that the consultant has little incentive to keep project costs at a minimum. A contract that specifies maximum contract costs, the products or outcomes to be achieved, the time frame within which the work will be completed, and the maximum number of days to be charged will ameliorate this problem.

Retainer

A fifth type of contract is written when the client wants to retain the consultant for a specific number of days within a prescribed time period. The consultant promises to make a certain number of days available, and the client agrees to pay the consultant an agreed-upon rate for all those days, regardless of whether or not the consultant actually provides consulting services.

By understanding the contract options, administrators can greatly enhance the productivity of their consultants. In each instance they should choose a contract that most closely meets the requirements of their own particular consulting situation. In no way should they feel limited to one particular contract type. For example, it may be appropriate to bring in a consultant under a daily rate plus reimbursable expenses contract. Then, once a particular problem is well defined, the client may choose a fixed price contract for completing the actual tasks. In another circumstance, a time and materials contract may be the best choice.

Contract Clauses

To develop a sound relationship between consultant and client, certain key issues must be addressed in every contract. Even in cases where the consultant is engaged to do a very limited task, a contract for services needs to be written. Such a document will prove itself to be well worth the effort if unforeseen obstacles or difficulties arise.

Listed below are a few of the issues that should form separate contract clauses.

1. *The Scope of Work.* The contract should summarize the actual services to be performed, including the precise manner in which the consultant expects to address the problem. The

initial proposal often serves as an attachment to the work scope.

2. *The Time Frame.* A consultant should specify the date on which the project will begin and end, as well as the dates for completing various interim tasks. The consultant may also include a Time/Activity Chart or Work Plan (see figure 4 on page 30).
3. *The Billing and Payment Schedule.* Dates for submitting bills, as well as the schedule of payments, should be specified in the contract.
4. *Confidentiality of Information.* If certain information collected during the course of study is to be kept confidential, the contract should state this clearly. The consultant must agree not to divulge information sources to anyone nor disclose to people outside the institution or agency any information that may be considered confidential. The client must agree not to ask the consultant to divulge confidential information.
5. *Canceling a Contract.* Because contracts sometimes need to be canceled, one clause should stipulate the circumstances under which this might occur and the process to be used. Clients always have the right to terminate contracts with consultants, provided they can give due cause and reasonable notice. Consultants, on the other hand, can cancel contracts if their clients do not provide the information they need to carry out the specified tasks, if their bills are not paid, or if clients in some other way do not meet their commitments.

   When a contract is canceled midway through a project, the consultant may be caught in the middle of data collection or report writing. The question then arises about what should be done with these documents. Assuming that the consultant has promised confidentiality to his sources, he cannot simply turn over all his interview material. Accordingly, the contract should include a provision for the fair disposition of this information to the proper sources.

6. *Consultant Independence.* The contract needs to state clearly that consultants can be advised about particular issues that ought to be addressed, but actual selection of the means, manner, and individuals who will address the topic are up to the consultant. This type of provision lends assurance that project results will not be unfavorably prejudiced or otherwise colored by the client's own opinions.

   If a consultant were to follow the client's recommendations, and even if the project turned out well, the project and probably the client would lose external credibility. On the other hand, if the consultant follows such advice and the project turns out poorly, the client will not only be worse off than before, but no one will know where to lay the blame. Because the client is paying for the consultant's advice and knowledge, it is best to give the consultant the autonomy he needs to perform his work in a professional manner.
7. *Limits of Liability.* The contract should clearly state the consultant's liability. While the consultant may make recommendations, the administrator, acting on behalf of the institution, must make a judgment about whether to accept, reject, or implement the consultant's recommendations.

   An administrator contracts with a consultant for services, for advice and counsel. Once the consultant has finished his work and has produced a report and recommendations, the administrator must then decide whether or not to act upon the consultant's recommendations. If the administrator has some doubt about the validity, reliability, or appropriateness of those recommendations, he may want to study the problem some more. He may also find that, for reasons beyond his control, he cannot act immediately on the consultant's recommendations.

   It is important to remember that a consultant's recommendations are time bound; they are usually based on what is appropriate at that point in time. The longer the time lag

between the receipt of recommendations and their implementation, the less likely the recommendations are to be appropriate. For example, the computer configuration that a consultant might have recommended in 1981 would be outdated in 1983, given the changes in technology. A planning process designed before the faculty voted to unionize might not be appropriate afterwards. A fund raising strategy designed around a veteran president is not likely to be suitable for a brand new president.

To summarize, there may be good reasons why the administrator does not implement the consultant's recommendations immediately. However, the longer he waits to do so, the greater the likelihood that the recommendations will need to be modified to reflect changed conditions, and the less the consultant can be held liable for his recommendations. If the institution for some reason does bring suit against the consultant, the damages that can be recovered are usually limited to the actual cost of the consulting project.

Once the Contract Is Signed

In essence, a contract is simply a reflection of shared understanding regarding the scope and methods of work. Sometimes, however, no matter how carefully the client and consultant work through the issues in each stage of the consulting project, problems arise after the contract is signed. Then, the individuals who sign on the dotted line are held responsible. In such cases, the client and consultant must acknowledge that problems do exist and that resolution of the difficulty may require a change in the work scope, time frame, or project outcomes. All contract alterations need to be specified in writing, duly signed, and attached to the contract document.

Occasionally, the consultant and client may wish to make

minor adjustments to the work schedule. If this does not affect the overall time frame or project budget, these adjustments can be accommodated within the original contract. For example, upon one occasion, a consulting team was slated to spend four days interviewing executives in a particular city. After finding that only a few executives were going to be in town that week, the schedule was modified to include three days of interviews in one week plus an additional day the next. If the consulting team had been asked to come back two weeks later, however, for four additional days of interviewing, that would have had an impact on the work scope, the time frame, and the budget. A change of that type would have necessarily required a contract addendum and, possibly, additional funds.

Well-designed contracts benefit both clients and consultants by laying firm project foundations. Such contracts can serve as restraints, protective buffers, or documents that set the groundwork for the basic terms and conditions of the consulting process. Whatever the case, the time of contract negotiation is the best time to air differences and resolve misunderstandings. If the contract is thoughtfully prepared, it can serve as a test of sincerity and a useful guidepost for consultants and clients alike.

CHAPTER 4

Political Realities and Project Responsibilities

By the time the client and consultant have signed the contract, they should clearly understand what is legally required. However, the project's success will depend on more than written commitments. To a large extent, it will depend on whether the client and consultant are psychologically committed to the project's success, and whether the client fulfills a set of important, but often unstated, responsibilities. Before discussing these responsibilities, we will take a look at the organizational setting within which the consulting projects occur.

Political Realities

Because consulting projects are carried out within the context of the ongoing life of the institution, administrators must be candid about campus politics; they must advise consultants about the groups or individuals who are likely to try to influence the project.

Power struggles within higher-education institutions are pervasive and real. Accordingly, administrators should always be

prepared for political activity, especially when consulting projects involve budgeting or planning. Resource allocation and institutional planning are issues that affect everyone at the institution.

Higher-education literature offers two conceptually different descriptions of institutional politics. Baldridge (1971) argues that decisionmaking in higher education involves many parties who participate and attempt to control, or at least influence, the process. March (1974) argues that decisionmaking is unpredictable, occurring only when deadlines force it. In many ways, it is uncontrollable. Figure 6 summarizes the characteristics of these two views.

According to Baldridge (1971), the process of problem resolution at colleges and universities does not follow the logical approach of rational decisionmaking where one small group of like-minded individuals tries to optimize the achievement of organizational goals. Instead, the political process involves three groups of "actors." The *authorities* (administrators) are organized in a formal structure; they are interested in achieving goals, implementing decisions, and gaining control through their work in the organization. The *partisans* (cliques or "associational interest groups" of faculty, staff, or students) are interested in influencing decisions in their favor. The *apathetics* (faculty, staff, or students) are those who are either not interested or else indifferent to issues and organizational processes.

The authorities and partisans try to control each other by using four power bases: bureaucratic resources, expertise (including professional influence), coercive tactics, and personal influence. Authorities often justify their actions as being legitimate functions and responsibilities associated with their institutional roles. They may employ sanctions, control decisionmaking participation, and even limit channels of communication. Partisans, on the other hand, trade heavily on their expertise, as well as their professional and personal influence.

In summary, Baldridge (1971) portrays institutions as consisting of multiple interest groups with heterogeneous goals and values.

FIGURE 6

Two Descriptions of Higher-Education Institutions

Characteristics	"Political Parties"	"Organized Anarchy"
Organizational goals	Heterogeneous	Ambiguous
Organizational processes	Well understood; individual or groups with the most power control the processes	Poorly understood; processes occur by trial and error, limitations of others, accidents
Participation in organizational decisionmaking	By two major groups: authorities and partisans (who may subdivide into cliques or associational interest groups)	No way to know which individual or group will participate regarding any issue or decision
Loyalty of organization member	To cliques or interest groups	To self
Outcomes of decisionmaking	"Resultants"; choices and goals are negotiated; most decisions are either the preferred alternative of the most powerful group or compromises between powerful groups	Goals are discovered after choices are made; most decisions occur because someone persists, or because deadlines must be met
Distribution of power	Among political groups; winners build and attempt to maintain power bases	Diffuse; those who persist may get their way; but with no organizational memory or learning, power does not accrue to one person or group

Jana B. Matthews-Halbower, "Consulting at Colleges and Universities: An Analysis of the Process" (Ed. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1979), p. 43.

Power plays and power strategies rely on the use of power bases. Decisions, when they are reached, are likely to be the preferred alternative of the person or group who has the most power, or who has used power most skillfully. Decisions may also be compromises between the major parties-at-interest.

March (1974), on the other hand, suggests that colleges and universities are actually "organized anarchics" rather than organized political systems. He suggests that organizational goals are ambiguous and ill defined. Preferences are discovered in retrospect after decisions are made. Participation in these processes is unpredictable. As March explains, the substance of an issue tends to have less bearing on decisionmaking participation than an individual's need for self-esteem and status affirmation. The heterogeneous collection of participants in the decision process results in a variety of problems and solutions, only some of which are related to the actual issue.

While these characterizations may be overdrawn, many administrators find them useful for understanding political behavior and activities within their institutions or administrative units. If the administrator is working in an institution that behaves like Baldridge's political system, he may be able to predict which groups will become politically active with respect to a certain issue. Certain groups are likely to perceive the consultant as an additional party-at-interest with values and goals that may differ from theirs. Members of the authority group, for example, may perceive the presence of a consultant as an administrator's attempt to wrest power from them.

It is quite common for authorities or partisans to try to influence or control projects. Several strategies are employed. First, they may try to redefine the problem by suggesting another set of tasks for the consultant or by trying to substitute another issue for the focus of the consulting project. Second, they are likely to express disapproval of the consultant's methodology, suggesting one that they think is more suitable, and thereby reorienting the project's direction. Third, they may try to control project participation and

information sources. Fourth, they may try to influence the consultant's perception of the situation, as well as his recommendations. Fifth, they will certainly try to exert some influence over the dissemination of the consultant's reports and the implementation of his recommendations.

It is even possible that the consultant and the project will be swept up in a larger political contest among the authorities and partisans seeking increased power. When this happens, the consultant and project may become political pawns rather than effective instruments for improving the institution's operations or processes.

If an administrator is working in an institution that behaves more like an organized anarchy, however, he will find it difficult to achieve consensus regarding the definition of problems, decisions, and commitment to a course of action. While people may not systematically oppose the consulting project, they may not be very supportive either. The most successful consulting projects tend to be those with a limited focus, involving a few people in a self-contained unit.

Regardless of how the institution behaves as a political organization, virtually every consulting project will require some change in the way people do their jobs. They may be asked to alter their normal patterns and relationships or to approach their usual tasks in new ways. Some will be flexible enough to experiment with changes and not feel threatened. Others will object, become recalcitrant, and may even oppose the project's goals. The administrator has a whole set of responsibilities, and one of them is to explain the rationale and the goals of the project to those who are likely to be most affected by it. While not everyone may be enthusiastic, most people are willing to cooperate in the development of solutions to difficult problems.

Unsuccessful consulting projects often result when administrators fail to understand the need to demonstrate strong *project commitment*. In some cases, the main problem arises when they fail to *communicate* to those at the institution about the project or else they are not *accessible* to the consultant. In other instances, administrators unknowingly hinder project success when they do not provide adequate *logistical support* or they neglect to *buffer* the project and the consultant from political power plays.

Project Commitment

The administrator should indicate, verbally and in writing, that the project is important to him, to his department or administrative unit, and to the whole institution. During the project, formal or informal occasions may arise where it will be important for him to reaffirm this commitment. It is equally important for the administrator to gain the support and commitment of top management to the project and the consultant. Support from the top contributes to the consultant's being accepted by others on campus, to his gaining access to people and information, to the acceptance of the consultant's report, and the implementation of whatever recommendations he might make.

Communications

At the beginning of the project, the administrator should prepare a memorandum explaining the project's goals, the consultant's role and responsibilities, background information about the consultant, the timetable for the project, and the tasks that need to be accomplished. This memorandum should be sent to all those who will be involved in the project.

As the time nears for the consultant to collect information—either from reports and documents or from individual interviews—the administrator will want to let the appropriate people know that the consultant will be visiting with them, and what kinds of information they might be able to provide. It is neither fair nor productive to expect someone to be interviewed who has no understanding of the project context or the kinds of information he is expected to provide.

Because almost all consultants prepare interim or final reports, it may be useful to have these reports reviewed by others, in addition to the administrator. Whatever the case, the administrator must decide who should receive reports and who should be invited to review meetings.

Logistical Support

Sometimes administrators do not realize that they or someone in their office will need to provide logistical support for the consultant and the project. It is much more efficient for someone on campus to set up interviews, check all relevant calendars, and choose an agreeable date for the consultant's visit.

Some administrators find it useful to appoint a staff member to serve as client contact for the project. In addition to the tasks listed above, this person can collect information from those on campus. He can also serve as informal project monitor. Without being obtrusive, he is in a position to tell how the project is progressing vis-a-vis the work plan. The client contact will know how many interviews have been completed, what information has not yet been received, and whether or not the project is falling behind schedule. His position enables him to receive informal feedback about issues that might not be discussed openly with the administrator.

Administrators should think carefully about the selection of the client contact. That person should be respected and perceived as

the administrator's emissary. He should be someone who is sensitive enough to know when a problem is developing, perceptive enough to be able to analyze its elements, and smart enough to know when to take it to the administrator and not try to solve it himself.

Accessibility to the Consultant

The administrator must provide the consultant with the same courtesy and accessibility that he provides his own staff. When the consultant calls, the administrator should make every effort to talk with him or return his calls as soon as possible. When the consultant is on campus, the administrator should schedule time at the beginning and at the end of the consulting visit for formal and informal conversations about the project and the consultant's work. These conversations enable the administrator and the consultant to sense when changes are needed in the project's scope of work and timetable.

At times the consultant may be puzzled because he has received conflicting information. Without revealing the sources, he might need to report two conflicting stories and ask the administrator to provide some historical perspective, or to help him understand the organizational context. While guarding against the temptation to interfere, the administrator will need to give the consultant some ad hoc guidance during the course of the project.

Buffering

As mentioned earlier, the consultant and/or the project may occasionally become swept up in campus politics. Administrators at institutions that are especially politicized may want to appoint an advisory committee or some existing group to oversee the project and "buffer" it from political activity. It may be useful to have people representing the other authorities or partisans sitting

on the committee since they can report directly to their constituents about the goals and progress of the project. It may also be easier to achieve consensus among several of the parties-at-interest with a smaller group representing many interests.

By appointing a group to oversee the project, the administrator can maintain distance from the project, and some objectivity about what the consultant is recommending. It may be important that the administrator not be perceived as having been sold on the idea by the consultant.

If an administrator decides to create an advisory group, or wants the group to serve as "clients" for the study, this should be discussed and negotiated with the consultant, before the proposal is written and the contract is negotiated. Working for multiple clients (a multiclient study) requires additional time for meetings and review of materials. Building good interpersonal relations with everyone in the group takes even further time and negotiation.

If a change in client occurs after the project is under way, work will have to be temporarily suspended while several of the issues in the Exploration and Definition Stages are reexamined and discussed. Changing from one client to a multiclient group will almost certainly require renegotiation of the work scope and, perhaps, the development of a whole new proposal contract.

CHAPTER 5

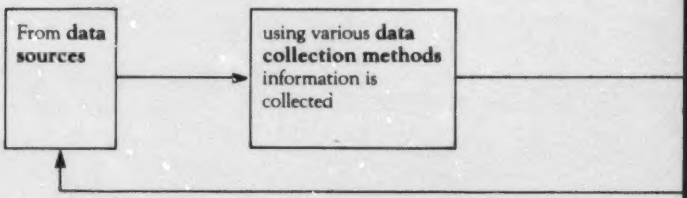
Evaluation: Was It Worth It?

Despite the obvious need, relatively little has been written about how to evaluate a consulting project. As a result, clients and consultants often repeat some of the same mistakes over and over again. If the process is to be improved, both parties must put forth the time and effort to identify and understand what went right, as well as what went wrong.

To help in this endeavor, figure 7 offers a possible evaluation model. Experts in evaluation theory agree that evaluative processes should be designed specifically to meet the needs of those who will be making decisions. There are two kinds of evaluations: formative and summative. Formative evaluations are done by those who are involved in the ongoing aspects of the project. Summative evaluations are carried out by those who must implement the recommendations that result from the project.

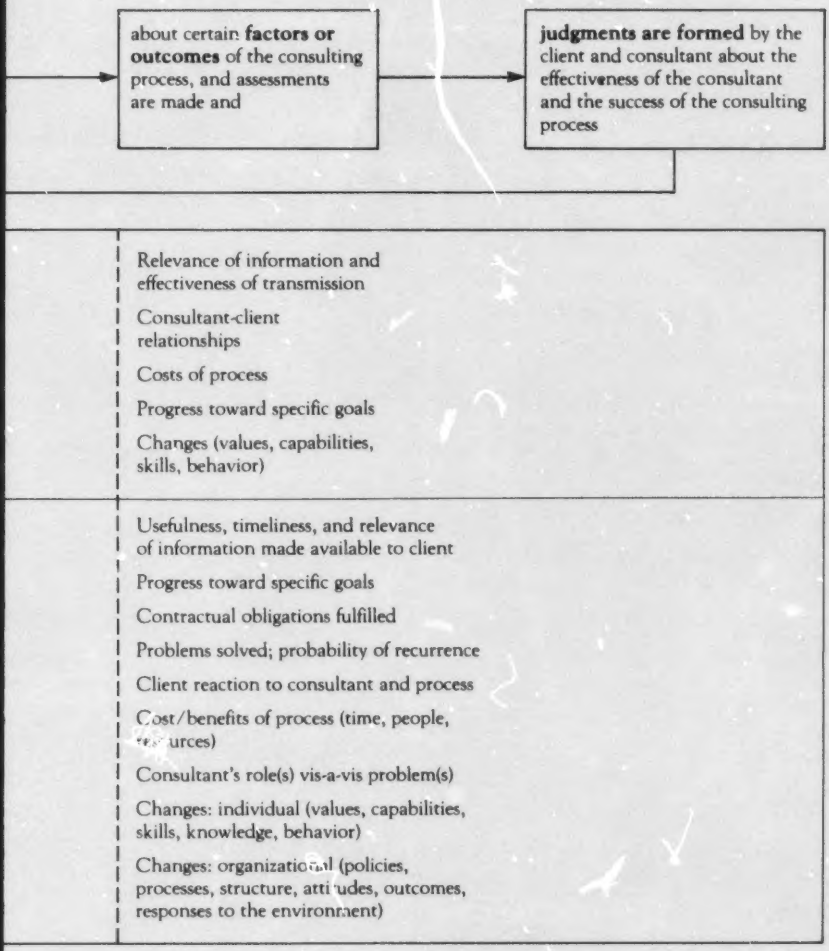
To better understand this distinction, we might note that formative evaluations are usually informal and they are intended to help the consultant and client determine whether they need to modify the project design, the work plan, or their relationships.

FIGURE 7: Elements of a Model for



Formative Evaluation	Sponsor Client Client System Consultant	Discussion Observation Interviews Operations reports Organizational records	
Summative Evaluation	Sponsor Client Client System Consultant Customers or Clienteles	Discussion Observations Interviews Questionnaires Documentation Specially designed feedback instruments Operations reports Organizational records	

Evaluating the Consulting Process


about certain **factors or outcomes** of the consulting process, and assessments are made and
judgments are formed by the client and consultant about the effectiveness of the consultant and the success of the consulting process
Relevance of information and effectiveness of transmission
Consultant-client relationships
Costs of process
Progress toward specific goals
Changes (values, capabilities, skills, behavior)
Usefulness, timeliness, and relevance of information made available to client
Progress toward specific goals
Contractual obligations fulfilled
Problems solved; probability of recurrence
Client reaction to consultant and process
Cost/benefits of process (time, people, resources)
Consultant's role(s) vis-a-vis problem(s)
Changes: individual (values, capabilities, skills, knowledge, behavior)
Changes: organizational (policies, processes, structure, attitudes, outcomes, responses to the environment)

Source: Jana B. Matthews-Halbower, "Consulting at Colleges and Universities: An Analysis of the Process" (Ed. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1979), p. 177.

The decision about whether to continue, redirect, terminate, or expand the consulting process requires another type of evaluation that combines aspects of both formative and summative evaluations. It requires an assessment of what has been accomplished vis-a-vis what was proposed, or an evaluation of organizational or consultant performance against planned objectives.

Summative evaluations are more formal. At the end of the project the administrators ought to do a formal, summative evaluation of the following issues:

1. *Information Collection and Transmittal.* Was the information collected by the consultant useful and relevant to the problem? Was it transmitted appropriately to the client and to the various parties-at-interest?
2. *Progress Toward Goals.* How much progress was made toward the goals outlined in the proposal? If the consultant was called in to define a problem, was the problem adequately defined? If he was called in to provide a solution, was it a workable solution? If the consultant was asked to help design or improve organizational processes and procedures, did he do so? Have these processes been successfully implemented at the institution?
3. *Fulfillment of Contractual Obligations.* Did the consultant perform satisfactorily, according to the contractual requirements? For example, did he make campus visits on the scheduled dates? Did he write and deliver interim reports and final reports at the times specified in the contract? Were bills and invoices submitted properly, and in general, was the business side of the consulting project handled well? If the answer to any of these questions is no, can this be explained by something the administrator or client contact failed to do?
4. *Consultant-Client Relationship.* Did the consultant work effectively with the client to develop a relationship of trust and mutual understanding about what needed to be accomplished in the organization? Was the consultant knowledgeable

about the political implications, and was he able to understand the stress and pressures upon the client from various constituents? Was the consultant able to work well with others in the institution to achieve project goals?

5. *Cost and Benefits of the Project.* In retrospect, was the institution really able to afford the costs of the consulting project? Were the benefits sufficient to offset
   - administrative and faculty hours spent on this project;
   - consultant expenses and other direct costs to solve the problem;
   - "opportunity" costs;
     —Could the funds, energy, and time committed to the project have been put to better use on something else? What price did the institution pay for not addressing those problems that were set aside during the project?
   - psychic costs;
     —How difficult has it been for people to share information and to depend on someone outside the organization for help?
   - dislocation or confusion.
     —How much more will it cost the organization to implement the consultant's recommendations in terms of outright dollars that need to be spent, changes in organizational structures and staffing patterns, morale, and so forth?
6. *The Consultant's Role vis-a-vis the Problems.* Was the consultant able to play various roles that were required, given the particular situation at hand? When required to be a diagnostician, was he able to be one? When it was appropriate for him to teach and transfer knowledge and skills, was he able to do so? When it was important for him to be confrontational and to call into question assumptions, theories, and biases, was he able to do so without alienating others in the organization?

7. *Individual Changes.* Did changes occur in particular individuals within the organization in terms of their values, capabilities, skills, knowledge, and general behavior? Even though the consulting project may not have been aimed at causing individuals to change, it is important to assess whether or not changes that occurred in individuals were directly related to the consultant or the consulting project.
8. *Organizational Changes.* What new policies, processes, structures, outcomes, or procedures have been developed as a result of the project? In general, have these changes been positive? Have they moved the institution toward being more effective or have they produced negative results? Have people become defensive about the changes that would result from the implementation of the consultant's recommendations?

The number and strength of the client's affirmative and negative responses to these issues serve as indicators of the consultant's effectiveness. In addition to his own perceptions, the person who carries out the evaluation can talk with others in the organization to determine their opinions of the consultant and the process. Individuals such as the person who first brought the consultant into the organization, those with whom the consultant has worked most closely, and the consultant himself may prove most helpful. The client will have made observations about the consultant while he was meeting with other people, he will have seen copies of the reports that the consultant prepared, and he will have been able to read the minutes of pertinent meetings. All these will provide valuable information.

The administrator who takes the time to make systematic evaluations will discover several benefits. First, by learning from the project's failures as well as successes, he can know what to do and what to watch out for the next time a consultant is engaged. Second, if the administrator gives the consultant feedback on his performance, the consultant can learn from the experience and continue to grow and improve as a consultant. Third, if the

administrator thinks about these issues in a systematic manner, he will be able to provide relevant information about the consulting project to others.

Summary

This book was written to provide higher-education administrators with a better understanding of what is required to manage consultants effectively. The consulting process is interesting and dynamic, but it is not a total mystery. Every project goes through certain stages, and some predictable issues will arise during each stage. Small, short projects simply move through the stages more quickly than longer, more complicated projects. If the administrator takes the time to address the issues outlined in this monograph, in their proper order and during their appropriate stages, the project should move smoothly toward completion.

Both administrators and consultants are often tempted to rush through the Exploration and Definition Stages and to "get on with the work." Administrators must resist this temptation and take the time to develop a clear understanding of what the problem is and the best way of addressing it.

Think about the class of problem and decide whether an expert is needed (that is, someone who is likely to perform as a standard consultant), whether someone can help develop better organizational processes (that is, someone who is likely to function as a process consultant), or whether someone must be able to do both. After deciding, then start looking for that type of person.

Search carefully for the right consultant. Take time to check his credentials, check references with former clients, invite him to the campus or meet with him, and be certain that he can provide the assistance you need. Check to see if he can play all the necessary roles.

Do not treat proposals and contracts lightly. A carefully written proposal and a detailed activity plan can serve as evidence of the

consultant's grasp of the problem. Discussion of the contractual clauses, agreement on the work scope, and budget negotiations are essential activities. These can help reinforce the psychological commitments that are requisite for project success.

Choose the contract type that is most appropriate for the work that needs to be done. Do not be afraid to break up the project into phases and to fund those phases separately, with different kinds of contracts if necessary.

Assess the political situation in which the consultant will be working, brief him on what is likely to happen, and set up safeguards, when they are needed, to insulate the project from campus power struggles.

Administrators have certain basic responsibilities to those who work for them, consultants included. They must be provided ample time to visit with the administrator and/or the client contact, appropriate logistical support to get the job done, and timely communications to people in the organization about the project and the role they are expected to play.

Project evaluation provides an invaluable tool for helping administrators and others learn what to do and what not to do with respect to a consulting project. These evaluations can also help administrators when they are asked to provide consultant references, or to provide feedback directly to the consultant.

Finally, it is important to think ahead about implementing the consultant's recommendations. With successful consulting projects, implementation activities start before the consultant has even finished writing his report. When that happens, administrators can rest assured that they have made effective use of their consultants.

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